

Annual Report 2016

Jack Markell, Governor Jeffrey Bullock, Secretary of State Larence Kirby, Executive Director William Farley, Chairman

Veterans FIRST in the First State

State of Delaware Department of State Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs (302) 739-2792

www.veteransaffairs.delaware.gov



Mission Statement

The Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs is dedicated to advancing information, providing benefits and creating opportunities for service members, veterans and their families in recognition of their service to the Nation and their value to our community.

Introduction

The Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs, a Department of State division, is dedicated to assisting Veterans and their family members obtain benefits and services through government and civic agencies. The Commission assists Veterans with disability compensation, employment, housing, legislative, and mental health concerns. Their focus is proving state-wide advocacy for 78,000 Veterans residing in Delaware. The Commission was established by the General Assembly in 1987.

- ✓ Represent Delaware in concert with U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and other agencies on matters of mutual interest and concern.
- ✓ Maintain a repository for Delaware Veterans' "Statement of Service".
- ✓ Advise Delaware departments and agencies on all matters pertaining to Veterans and their family members.
- ✓ Utilize Veteran Service Officers to assist Veterans in each county.
- ✓ Manage two Delaware Veterans Memorial Cemeteries' operations.
- ✓ Provide administrative oversight to the Delaware Veterans Home.
- ✓ Initiate, review, and sponsor State legislation pertaining to Veterans.

The Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs consists of state employees: Executive Director, Accountant, Veteran Service Officers, Administrative Specialists, and Cemetery Personal. There are also 15 Commissioners (advisors), 13 serving from Veteran Service Organizations, and 2 serving at-large. Commissioners are appointed by the Governor for a four-year term.

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Executive Director

Larence Kirby advises a state-wide commission on communications with Veterans, service agencies, and legislative officials regarding issues impacting approximately 78,000 Delaware Veterans. He was appointed by the Secretary of State in November 2014.

Director Kirby oversees two Delaware Veteran Cemeteries and provides oversight to the Delaware Veterans Home. He counsels Veterans, Service Members, and families on education, employment, financial, and burial benefits. He advises on programs addressing Veteran homelessness, unemployment, suicide prevention, substance abuse, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Director Kirby is a retired Command Chief Master Sergeant with 30 years active duty Air Force service. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for actions in Afghanistan and selflessly identified hundreds of combat casualties at Dover's Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations Center.

Director Kirby has two Masters Degrees, one in Counseling and one in Education and is a Licensed Professional Counselor of Mental Health in the State of Delaware.

Director Kirby is focused on assisting Veterans, ensuring they receive the services and compassion earned from defending our great nation.



Giving Back

Delaware Veterans Trust Fund continues to provide emergency financial assistance for honorably discharged. The fund, enacted in 2013, assisted 93 Veterans in 2016 with utilities, rent/mortgage, vehicle, education, and medical assistance. The Friends of the Delaware Veterans Fund provided 501(c)3 coverage and fundraising help. They encouraged business owners, sponsored fundraising events, and publicized the fund garnering financial contributions. They also hosted the third annual trust fund dinner which drew hundreds of donors. Citizens can donate directly to the commission, via state income taxes, or through the **delawareveteranstrustfund.com** website.



Delaware Joining Forces (**DJF**) is a state-wide network of "Veteran friendly" agencies and organizations. The network is two elements consisting of "face to face" meetings and an online directory. Each quarter DJF participants meet to present data about their agencies and to exchange information on assisting Veterans. These meetings allow "Veteran friendly" information to be communicated throughout the state. Participants are registered on the **delawarejoiningforces.com** website categorized into ten sections (i.e. employment, housing, mental health, etc.). The categories allow viewers to find a specific area of assistance provided by agencies. Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs hosts the online directory with application process to list recognized organizations. These organizations connect service members, veterans, and their families with public services, community groups, service providers, health care centers, veteran service organizations, and other agencies. The DJF website contains 130 service providers and recruitment is on-going. The goal is to have 300 providers then focus marketing toward Veterans in need of assistance.

DJF is part of the Joining Forces national initiative which works hand in hand with public and private sectors to ensure that Service Members, Veterans, and their Families have the tools they need to succeed throughout their lives.







"No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another."
- Charles Dickens

Noteworthy

Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness: In May 2015, Governor Markell challenged state leaders to address the state's homeless Veteran situation. Dover Mayor Robin Christiansen and Commissioner Bill Farley led the Kent County/Delaware charge inspiring teamwork. The teams included the Delaware Housing Authority, Local Governments, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, the Homeless Planning Council of Delaware, the Delaware Continuum of Care, Supportive Services for Veterans Families, and the Commission and since January 2015 Delaware housed 414 homeless Veterans. In November, Governor Markell announced that Delaware had effectively ended Veteran homelessness, receiving certification from the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. Vice President Joe Biden and United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julian Castro made the official announcement during the Commission's Veterans Day Ceremony.

Transition Assistance Program Briefing: Director Kirby, through Dover Air Force Base leadership, incorporated a Commission brief during the monthly Transition Assistance Program. The Commission provides benefits information to transitioning Service Members preparing them for separation/retirement within the next 12 months. Understanding Veteran benefits is crucial in making the transition from military service to Veteran.

My VA Communities Delaware: Vice Chairman Farley was named Chairman, My VA Communities Delaware. The community's focus is on resolving concerns between Veterans and the Wilmington VA Medical Center through communication. These concerns can range from medical treatment, benefits, and access to care. Director Kirby serves as Vice Chair and the team members come from multiple Veteran assistance agencies.

POW/MIA Chair Dedication: In May, the Commission dedicated a POW/MIA Chair located in the front of the Dover office. Representative Earl Jaques provided remarks and multiple state delegates were present. This is a small expression of gratitude towards the thousands who kept faith in our country as Prisoners of War and who are still Missing in Action.

Veteran Moving Assistance: In July, multiple Commission employees/friends, led by Sable Phomphakdy, helped move an elderly Veteran on 23 July. The Korean War Veteran secured a new residence but did not have the means to move his household items to that location. The Commission team got together, transported his items, and treated the Veteran to breakfast afterwards.

Incarcerated Veterans Group Donation Ceremony: In October, Director Kirby attended this event at the Sussex Correctional Institution. Forty-One incarcerated Veterans presented monetary donations to six county non-profit groups. They provided testimonies about the positive elements of the Veterans Group and how it allowed them to focus on positive actions. The program provided a good learning tool as supporting incarcerated Veterans presents a challenging goal.

Events

Veterans Cemetery Kick Off (14 January): Director Kirby met with The National Cemetery Administration, Vandemark and Lynch (architect firm), and Cemetery Administrators to formulate the cemetery expansion plans. The expansion, at both cemeteries, will begin in the fall of 2016.

Dover Air Force Base Honor Guard Recognition (16 February): Director Kirby visited the honor guard to recognize their performance. The honor guard posted the flags and provided a 21-gun salute, in the steady downpour, during the Middle East / Afghanistan Memorial Dedication in November. Director Kirby addressed the 30 person team and presented challenge coins to the 12 participating members. The event was also attended by base leadership.

Brain Injury Association of Delaware Conference (10 March): Director Kirby and Chairman Sarg operated a display table forwarding information. The conference provided information and speakers assisting those with brain injury concerns. Veterans fall into this category through Traumatic Brain Injuries sustained in combat zones and the commission was able to address them and other eligible Veterans.

Medal of Honor Upgrade Ceremony (25 March): Director Kirby and Commissioner Smith were present at the African-American Medal of Honor Memorial (Wilmington) to recognize two additional names being added to the monument. Congressman Carney, New Castle County Officials, Wilmington Officials, and Director Kirby provided remarks. The monument is located in Wilmington at 18th and Baynard and features the names of African-Americans who have participated in multiple military conflicts.

Veterans Center PTSD Group (31 March): Director Kirby toured the Georgetown Veterans Center and participated in the PTSD group therapy. He discussed assistance and presented commission challenge coins to participants and staff. The center is instrumental in treating mental health concerns and is a commission referral agency.

Veterans Summit (18 April): Director Kirby, Chairman Sarg, Vice Chairman Farley attended the summit hosted by Senator Carper at the Wilmington VA Medical Center. The gathering provided VA patient treatment/access information, patient quality of care information, and future considerations. Congressman Carney and Senator Coons were also in attendance, in addition to Department of VA and Military Affairs leaders.

Veterans Office Hours (22 and 25 March): Director Kirby, Chairman Sarg, Commissioner Armbruster, and corresponding Veteran Service Officers attended Congressman Carney hosted events. Multiple Veteran-centric agencies provided information during the Sussex County and New Castle County sessions. The Wilmington VA Medical Center provided healthcare and benefits information through their electronic help stations.

Our Community Salutes (10 May): Director Kirby was the keynote speaker for this event. The evening recognized 58 high school seniors who enlisted in the Armed Forces and will be serving following graduation. Service Members and Veterans shared stories of military service and explained the pride of becoming part of service to our country.

"22 in 22" Challenge (7 June): Admin Josh Matticks attended this awareness event at Legislative Hall. The official resolution recognizing 7 – 28 June as the "22 in 22" Challenge, encouraged all Delawareans to learn about and raise awareness of Veteran suicide. Participants performed 22 pushups, highlighting the 22 suicides daily committed by Veterans.

Habitat for Humanity (17 August): Director Kirby, Chairman Sarg, and Vice Chairman Farley attended this event in downtown Dover. The Kent County chapter dedicated two homes which were awarded to Veterans. The homes will help reduce the number of homeless Delaware Veterans.

Delaware Delegation Veterans Fair (22 August): Service Officer Murrell and Admin Anderson maintained an information table. The fair, at Wilmington University Dover, was sponsored by Senators Carper and Coons and Congressman Carney. The Commission provided resource information to Veterans seeking employment.

The Wall That Heals Opening Ceremony (1 September): Director Kirby, Chairman Sarg, Vice Chairman Farley, Commissioner Coons, and Commissioner Corsa attended this event at the Delaware Technical and Community College Owens Campus. The wall is a replica of the Vietnam Memorial and was on display through 4 September.

First State Community Partnership Program (8 September): Director Kirby attended this working group at Dover Air Force Base. The group's intent is to gather ideas for an improved professional relationship between the base and state civilian organizations.

Veteran's Treatment Court (16 September): Director Kirby and Chairman Sarg attended this session at Kent County Superior Court. The Court provides alternative sentencing/guidance for eligible low-level Veterans. Judge William Witham recognized Chairman Sarg and the Commission for their assistance with the court and presented a plaque.

POW/MIA Day Ceremony (15 September): Director Kirby was the keynote speaker at Dover Air Force Base. The event honored Prisoners of War and Missing in Action, while also focusing on recently repatriated (returned home) Veterans who were previously Missing in Action.

Wilmington VAMC Town Hall (19 September): Director Kirby, Chairman Sarg, and Vice Chairman Farley attended this forum. The federal Veterans Administration provided benefits assistance and listened to Veteran concerns. Leadership from both Wilmington and Philadelphia were present.

Central Violation of Probation Veteran Visit (10 October): Director Kirby visited this group at the Vaughn Correctional Facility, Smyrna. He briefed eight inmates on Veteran benefits for both incarcerated and transitioning inmates. Director Kirby provided local/federal benefit pamphlets and facilitated a "question and answer" period. This information exchange was important as Veteran inmates often have difficulty transitioning back into civilian life.

Veterans Cemeteries Pre-Construction Meeting (26 October): Director Kirby attended this meeting at the Collins Building (Dover). The architect firm and the Office of Management Budget discussed the expansion project that will increase both cemeteries' interment space.

Retiree Appreciation Day (22 October): Commissioner McMullen attended this event at Dover Air Force Base. The event provided military retired personnel with base, state, and civilian agency resources. Commissioner McMullen briefed the audience on Commission information.

Student Veterans Conference (28 October): Director Kirby and Commissioner Sarg attended this event at Delaware Technical and Community College's Terry campus. Veteran based speakers and presenters provided the audience with information and motivational comments.

Delaware Technical and Community College Veterans Breakfast (7 November): Director Kirby was the keynote speaker at the Terry Campus. The school honored Veterans placing an emphasis on the Gulf War which began 25 years ago.

Community Mental Health Conference (10 November): Director Kirby and Commissioner Sarg attended this event at the Chase Center. The event focused on mental health issues impacting Delawareans and Director Kirby presented comments on Veteran Mental Health concerns.

Capstones

Bear Cemetery Memorial Day Recognition (28 May): The Veterans of Foreign War in conjunction with the Commission hosted this event. The ceremony recognized the efforts of Veterans in defense of our nation and those interred in the cemetery.

Delaware Memorial Bridge Memorial Day Recognition (30 May): The Korean War Veterans Association in conjunction with the Commission hosted this event. The ceremony recognized the sacrifices of New Jersey and Delaware Veterans as their names are located on the adjoining monument. Notable attendees included Governor Markell, U.S. Delegates, and multiple state leaders.

Flag Day Recognition (14 June): The Vietnam Veterans of America in conjunction with the Commission hosted this event. The ceremony recognized the adoption of the United States flag.

Freedom 5K Event (2 July): The Commission hosted its annual 5K race in Dover at Silver Lake Park. The race featured approximately 130 participants and generated donations for the Delaware Veterans Trust Fund.

Mental Health Summit (14 September): Director Kirby, Admin Anderson, Chairman Sarg, and Vice Chairman Farley attended this event at the Chase Center. The summit focused on Veteran mental health issues, focusing on suicide prevention. Director Kirby spoke on Mental Health issues affecting Veterans and the Commission had an information table.

Delaware Veterans Stand Down (23 September): Director Kirby, Chairperson Farley, Vice Chairperson Showell, and multiple Commission personnel attended this event at the Walter Fox Post in Dover. The event gathers Veterans and connects them with various agencies and organizations that assist Veterans. The Commission managed an information table supplying Veterans with state information. Director Kirby and Chairman Farley provided remarks to approximately 1000 Veterans and 150 vendors. In addition to information, Veterans also received meals and clothing.

Veterans Day Bridge Ceremony (11 November): The Delaware National Guard in conjunction with the Commission hosted this event at the War Memorial adjacent to the Delaware Memorial Bridge. Vice President attended and provided remarks with Delaware leadership. Secretary Julian Castro, Secretary U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development recognized Delaware as effectively ending Veteran Homelessness and presented a challenge coin to Governor Markell.

Delaware Veterans Parade (12 November): The Commission hosted this event in downtown Dover. The parade recognized Veterans from all eras and included multiple state participants.

Wreaths Across America Recognition (12 December): Director Kirby, Chairman Farley, and multiple Commissioners attended this event at Legislative Hall. This ceremony is done in conjunction with other states to recognize Veteran service by laying a wreath at Veteran gravesites nationally. Director Kirby provided comments and Distinguished Guests placed ceremonial wreaths by five Veteran memorials.



Legislation

Joint Military Affairs Committee Meeting – Director Kirby, Chairman Sarg, Commissioner Carroll, Commissioner Lardizzone, and Commissioner Smith met with legislators in January to discuss two proposals. The discussion involved veterans' eligibility for veteran cemetery interment and increasing "at-large" position within the commission ranks

House Bill 224 (Composition Commission of Veterans Affairs) – This bill retained the number of Commissioner at 15, but sought to increase the "at-large" numbers to five (up from two). The reason for the increase was to increase opportunities for female and recent era Veterans to serve as Commissioners. This category has been underrepresented on the Commission and through Veteran Service Organization submissions. The proposal was passed by the Senate and House then signed by Governor Markell in April.

House Bill 222 (Eligibility for Burial in the Delaware Veterans Cemeteries) – This bill clarified eligibility for burial and aligned the cemeteries under the rules from the National Cemetery Administration. The proposal was passed by the Senate and House then signed by the Governor Markell in May.

Governor's Proclamation (Military Appreciation Day) – Governor Markell signed the bill on 18 May. The signing acknowledged the efforts of Service Members and Veterans throughout Delaware and was attended by Director Kirby, the Gold Star Families, the 512th Airlift Wing (Dover AFB), and the Vietnam Veterans Association.

Governor's Signing (Bronze Medal Bill) - Governor Markell signed this bill on 15 Jun. The bill authorizes Bronze Star Medal recipients, who do not have the Valor device, to receive a license plate from the Department of Motor Vehicles. David Strawbridge, Delaware Technical and Community College, was instrumental in getting the bill signed as he and Director Kirby were in attendance.

House Bill 80 (Stolen Valor) Signing: Governor Markell signed the bill on 9 August. The bill adds to the crime of impersonation by including the impersonation of Service Members and Veterans of the Armed Forces to gain money, discounts, or tangible benefits. Director Kirby, Chairman Sarg, Vice Chairman Farley and multiple commissioners were in attendance.

Veterans Service Officers

State Veteran Service Officers provide assistance with information and application for Veterans' benefits including compensation and pension for service connected disabilities. The State Veterans Service Officers are accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to represent veterans and maintain professional membership with the National Association of County Veteran Services Officers. The Commission maintains a service officer in each county to assist Veterans with social service, federal Veterans Affairs, and referral information. Service Officers participate in outreach venues (job fairs) and visit state facilities (Vet Centers, Department of Labor, libraries) to assist Veterans to promote Commission activities.

CLAIMS INFORMATION

Year	Awarded	Millions	
		Awarded	
2012	459	\$7.6	
2013	330	\$5.2	
2014	361	\$6.2	
2015	298	\$5.1	
2016	170	\$3.1	

Veterans Memorial Cemeteries





Bear Veterans Memorial Cemetery

2465 Chesapeake City Road Bear, Delaware 19701 Phone: (302) 834-8046

Millsboro Veterans Memorial Cemetery

26669 Patriots Way Millsboro, Delaware 19966 Phone: (302) 934-5653

Delaware Veterans Memorial Cemeteries are dedicated veteran benefits and utilized by the community as a beautiful memorial park. Each cemetery is the pride of the local community as Veterans appreciate having a final resting place among others who served. In January, the National Cemetery Administration, Vandemark & Lynch Architects, and Commission/Cemetery Leaders gathered for a Cemetery Expansion meeting. Both cemeteries were approved for expansion, increasing future interment capability for Veterans. The Bear Cemetery will receive 3400 double depth crypts (burials) and 1280 columbarium niches (cremations). The Millsboro Cemetery will receive 1133 double depth crypts. The Bear Cemetery project began in October while the Millsboro project will begin in March 2017.

The Millsboro Cemetery received a compliance review (inspection) in October. The National Cemetery Administration reviewed operations, personnel, scheduling, interments, and appearance. The cemetery received a "Compliant" rating, including a 93% on Grounds Maintenance, and multiple agency compliments.

INTERMENTS

Year	Bear	Bear	Bear	Millsboro	Millsboro	Millsboro
	Total	Burial	In Wall	Total	Burial	In Wall
2012	729	502	227	284	149	135
2013	748	505	243	312	175	137
2014	813	566	247	333	188	145
2015	825	566	259	364	205	159
2016	890	563	327	354	176	178
All	17,429			4,462		

Partnerships

People's Place II - Veterans Outreach Program continues to provide a valuable service to Delaware's veterans. Funds for this program are provided through Assistance for Needy and Homeless Veterans (20-01-02) with an annual budget of \$49,400. The funds are used to transport Veterans to medical appointments, visit incarcerated Veterans, and refer Veterans to substance abuse programs.

Veterans Outreach Program Services – FY 15				
Intake New Veterans	57			
Follow-Up	386			
Visits to Incarcerated Veterans	321			
Referrals to Substance (Abuse) Programs	51			
Transportation to Wilmington VAMC	272			
Home Visits	62			

Veterans Law Clinic, Widener University, School of Law provides legal services to veterans with expungements, social service cases, and appeals with the U.S. Department of Veterans Administration, Board of Veterans Appeals and the U.S. Court of Appeals. In partnership, the Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs provides an annual stipend of \$49,500 to defray the service costs. During FY 15, the Veterans Law Clinic worked 251 cases with the help of 15 interns enrolled in the program.

The Starbucks Military Monday Program began October 2016. Attorneys and students meet with clients for one hour appointments at the Downtown Wilmington Starbucks once a month.

The clinic, started by Professor Thomas Reed, turned 20 years old and the clinic reached \$10M in amounts recovered for Veterans during this period.

Supportive Services for Veteran Families programs were developed by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Supportive service grants have been awarded to selected private non-profit organizations to assist low-income Veteran families residing in or transitioning to permanent housing. The Commission works closely with two organizations, the **Veterans Multi-Service Center** and **Connections**, to ensure Veteran assistance.

Veteran Data



Population 77,354 (source: FY Geographic Distribution of VA Expenditures)

New Castle - 34,992

Kent – 19,806

Sussex – 22,556

Period of Service September 2016

(source: VETPOP2014 Living Veterans by State)

	Total Veterans	Total Wartime Veterans	Gulf War Era Total	Vietnam Era Total	Korean War Total	WW II Total
Delaware	76,586	56,638	25,805	24,405	6,105	2,479
Percentage		73.9	33.6	31.8	7.9	3.2

Population Breakdowns September 2015

(source: Department of VA State Summary)

Women Veterans - 9,000

Number of Veterans Age 65 and Over - 37,000

Number of Veterans Receiving Disability Compensation - 12,006

Number of Enrollees in VA Health Care System - 26,323

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Distribution of Expenditures – FY 15			
Total	\$422,278		
Compensation & Pension	\$204,297		
Medical Care	\$170,854		
Education & Vocational Rehabilitation	\$36,680		
Construction	\$2,646		



Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs

Budget by Appropriation – FY 16

Item	General Fund	Appropriated	Non-	Total	
		Special Fund	Appropriated		
			Special Fund		
Personnel	\$1,310,300	0	0	\$1,310,300	
Travel	\$12,800	\$2,000	0	\$14,800	
Contractual	\$221,800	\$82,000	0	\$303,800	
Energy	\$54,400	0	0	\$54,400	
Supplies	\$2,300	\$36,000	0	\$59,000	
Veterans	\$25,000	0	0	\$25,000	
Trust Fund					
Total	\$1,647,300	\$120,000	0	\$1,767,300	

Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs

Actual Expense by Program – FY 16

Item	Dover Program	Bear Cemetery	Millsboro Cemetery	Total
	20143	20144	20145	
Personnel	\$363,700	527,500	253,400	\$1,144,600
Travel	\$13,400	\$1,200	0	\$14,600
Contractual	\$212,900	\$64,300	\$17,000	\$294,200
Energy	0	\$39,700	\$14,700	\$54,400
Supplies	\$18,200	\$26,300	\$9,600	\$54,100
Capital	0	0	0	0
Total	\$608,200	\$65,900	\$294,700	\$1,561,900

IN ACTION



















We are *honored* to serve Delaware's *Veterans*





